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Office of Information

(There follows a statement by Yoshio Fujimaki, chief of the Information Section, Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, as prepared by him for a meeting of USDA information workers on June 21, 1950. Because it is a model of conciseness, as well as being highly informative, it is reproduced here exactly as he wrote it, for the information of any who may care to read it.)

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ON THE ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION SERVICES IN JAPAN.

(June, 1950)

At first, I will explain about the information works in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Before the war, we had a proverb saying that "People should be informed nothing, only make them obey the law." When a new law was enacted, we gave an instruction telling people to observe this law, and that was all we had to do. It was quite bureaucratic and undemocratic. But, as the democracy expanded since the Allied Occupation began, it was found important to let people know everything about what their government has done and is doing. To know the government was thought to be the basis of democracy.

In March of 1947, a small Information Section was set up in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry by the assistance of G.H.Q. About one month later, Mr. Webster (Associate Director of Information, USDA) came to Japan. He stayed in Japan about three months, and made a recommendation as to the establishment of proper agricultural information services in Japan. According to his recommendation, the Information Section was enlarged and strengthened. At first, the number of staffs was only sixteen -- including part-time employees, and the budget afforded to this Section was only 500,000 yen. Its activities were very poor, especially as to the coordination of information activities of other bureaus and also as to the connection with the prefectural governments. But, in the fiscal year 1950, the Information Section has 25 staffs and its budget is about 18,000,000 yen.

The Information Section is subdivided into seven units: Press, radio, motion picture and slides, publications, posters, pamphlets and leaflets, and Agriculture and Forestry Consultation Office. Beside the Minister's Secretariat to which the Information Section belongs, the Ministry has five bureaus and three agencies, and each bureau or agency has some information specialists. The number of each bureau or agency information officers is different. Agricultural Improvement Bureau has the largest number, and Live Stock Bureau has only one. We have weekly conference of these bureau or agency information officers on every Wednesday afternoon to talk and discuss about the information activities.

Now, I'll explain you how we are using many kinds of information media.

The first is press. In Japan, there are three big central newspapers--Asahi, Mainichi and Yomiuri. They issue their prefectoral edition in almost all the prefectures. They are daily newspapers, and Asahi and Mainichi have some 3,450,000 circulation. Yomiuri has some 1,700,000. We have 135 big local newspapers, and if we count small newspapers the number will be several hundred. We have another kind of newspapers--that is called "agricultural newspapers". They number about twenty. The biggest one is "Japan Agriculture Newspaper" and its circulation is about 160,000. Next is "Farm Village Newspaper" and its circulation is about 50,000. Agricultural newspapers are not daily. Some are weekly; some are semi-monthly, and some are issued every three days.

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Beside these newspapers, there are two big press-service companies--that is "Kyodo" and "Jiji".

Almost all the Tokyo newspapers and some big local newspapers send newspapermen to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. They organize two clubs, and we have two rooms for their clubs in the Ministry Building. One of the two clubs is the daily newspapermen's club, and the other is the agricultural newspapermen's club.

When the Minister or other high officials want to have press-conference or when the bureaus or agencies want to make press-release, they must take contact with the Information Section, usually one day before. Then the Information Section takes contact with the newspapermen's clubs and settles the date of conference or release. At the press-conference, staffs of Information Section go with the officials concerned. The press-release are done by the Information Section usually by handing newspapermen a mimeographed or sometimes printed materials, and some officials in charge of the matter give explanation about it. Sometimes this explanation is omitted.

The mimeographed or printed materials are mostly made by each bureau or agency concerned, but sometimes they are made by the Information Section. Usually the manuscript cannot be reviewed by the Information Section, as they have to be made very hurriedly.

Besides, we have a weekly conference with agricultural newspapermen, and the Information Section or the officials of other bureaus or agencies talk with them on current topics.

The number of times of press-conferences and press-releases in the fiscal year 1949 amounted to 301.

These are two problems we are suffering from.

The one is that the newspapermen are very eager to make scoops. They walk around in the Ministry, talk with many high and low officials, and make scoops before they are officially released. If one newspaper puts on its paper some important scoops, many other newspapers will ignore or deny it, and the result is unfavorable for making wide information. But, as it is quite free for newspapermen to pick up materials, we cannot control it. We have nothing to do but to urge the bureau or agency to make more releases, but the officials are not so willing to make them, because when they make release, they are asked many questions that are very difficult for them to answer.

The other difficulties we have is how to send news quickly to local newspapers that cannot dispatch a newspaperman to Tokyo. We have not enough budget to send news directly to so many local newspapers.

Next, I will explain you about radio. In Japan we have now only one broadcasting company--that is called NHK. It has eight central broadcasting stations, and under them there are 38 local stations. Tokyo Central (JOAK) is fifty K.W. Other central stations are 10 K.W., and local stations are usually 0.5 K.W. The number of radio-receivers are more than 8,000,000--that means about half of the population of Japan can hear the radio.

We have Farm Radio Program. Every morning from 5:00 to 5:30, we have "Early Bird Time". Music, dialogue, lecture or news on farming are broadcasted. On Tuesday and Thursday from 12:45 to 12:30, we have "Farmers Leisure Time". Light (more)

music that farmers are fond of flows, and along with the music some farm news are spoken. Everyday, except Saturday and Sunday, in the evening from 6:25 to 6:30, we have "Tomorrow's Food Time". Two or three short memos about farming and food situation are broadcasted. On every Monday night, from 8:00 to 8:30, we have "New Farm Village Time". Agricultural news of the week, music, lecture, sometimes radio drama are broadcasted. These Farm Radio Program can be heard all over Japan at the same time, except that in "New Farm Village Time" there are ten minutes local time inserted that can be used by local radio stations.

Usually Farm Radio Program is decided one month before it is broadcasted. The Information Section gathers the items that the bureaus or agencies want to be broadcasted in September by July 15. The Information Section arranges them properly and present them to the Farm Section in NHK by July 20. When the program is approved by CIE, it comes back to the Information Section and Information Section asks other bureaus or agencies to make manuscripts of lecture or speech to be broadcasted.

The number of Farm Radio Programs in the fiscal year 1949 amounted 1334.

The cooperation between the Ministry and NEK is very good. Only one problem we have now is that the time for Farm Radio Program is not always good. "Early Bird Time" is too early even for farmers, and in the "Farmer's Leisure Time" they are on the farm and cannot hear it.

Next is publications. The Information Section issues four kinds of publications. The first is "Agriculture and Forestry Year Book". It is published annually--usually in June or July. It is distributed freely or sold to prefectural governments, schools and so on. The number of copies each issue is 3,000. The second is "Agriculture and Forestry Monthly". It contains explanation of new laws, regulations, agricultural technique and so on. It is also distributed freely or sold to governments, schools and so on. The number of copies each issue is 15,000.

The third is "Norin Koho" (Agriculture and Forestry Information). It is published semi-monthly, and the number of copies each issue is near 100,000. It is intended to be read by farmers in general, and so we take every care that it can be read easily by the graduates of primary school. Seven copies are distributed freely to each of 11,000 villages, and in order to send it as quickly as possible we send it directly to local offices (or county offices) from Tokyo, not through prefectural government. We are trying to let farmers read it in turn, but, to tell the truth, it is not always read by all the farmers, and is read mostly by the leaders of farmers. It is also distributed freely to 9,000 county agents and 46 prefectural governments. It is a smart little bulletin and its readability is highly appreciated by every reader.

The last one is "Information Letter". This is published weekly. It contains government instructions, press-releases, explanation of important agricultural news, guide for information techniques and so on. It is printed 1,000 copies each issue. It is distributed freely to the Information offices in prefectural governments, central and local radio broadcasting stations (R.F.D.) and some of the newspaper companies.

The above four kinds of publications are all edited by the Information Section, and beside these publications, other bureaus or agencies also publish about 27 kinds of periodicals, but they do not have so big circulation.

We have also about fifty kinds of private agricultural magazines. "Agricultural Asahi" and "Agricultural Mainichi" have each about 10,000 circulation. "Ie-no-Hikani" (Home Light) has the biggest circulation. Before the war it had some 1,500,000, but it is now about 500,000.

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We have editors' conference of these agricultural magazines once a month and give them information and lectures on important theme of the time.

I will proceed to motion-pictures. In Japan, because motion-picture theatres are concentrated in cities or towns, farmers have little chance to see movies, and they have great interest to see movies. Since 1948, the Information Section has made seven motion-pictures. The first one is titled "Young Village". This picture treats rural electrification, and the number of prints sold amounts to 112 including the prints made by CIE and delivered to prefectoral Film Libraries. The second one is the famous "Story of Bending with Years". The theme of this picture is the elevation of women's social position through the activities of agricultural cooperative association. I believe this is the best cultural motion-picture ever made in Japan. The number of prints sold amounts 153 including also CIE films. The third is the "Fishing Light" treating Fisheries System Reform. The fourth is the "Green Bicycle" treating the county agents (In Japan the county agents use green bicycles--not automobiles). The fifth is the "Growing Village" treating the Agricultural Insurance. Next is the "Springtime of Village" treating the rural youth club. The last is the "Your Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry". This is intended to let farmers know the activities of our Ministry--Just like Decision For Bill" of USDA.

Most of them are two reels of black and white talkie.

Beside these pictures made by the Information Section, the Ministry has 55 kinds of motion-pictures, but they are not so interesting.

These motion-pictures are bought by the prefectoral governments on agricultural coops., and showed to farmers in public halls or schools of farm villages. The admission is in most cases free, and in some cases when one or two feature pictures are show together, people have to pay 5 yen (one and a half cent) for admission.

The Information Section has no facilities or equipments to make motion-pictures, and so the Information Section makes them by contracts with private motion picture companies. We must pay the money of about 600,000 yen (\$1600) per one reel (1,000 feet of negative film), and it is somewhat expensive. The motion-pictures are all planned by the Information Section, and other bureaus or agencies can only ask the Information Section to make such and such motion-pictures.

We have also film-strips and slides. These are good information media to explain the agricultural technique. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has 14 kinds of film-strips and slides. They are both single and double frame. They are made by other bureaus or agencies.

As to the posters, pamphlets and leaflets, they are also made by the bureaus and agencies. They only consult with the Information Section before they make them. The Information Section pre-reviews the original designs, layouts, colors or manuscripts and give them advices to make them better.

Posters are usually drawn by private specialists. Pamphlets and leaflets are usually written by the information officials in the bureaus or agencies, but in rare cases they are written by the Information Section. The number of copies of these differs according to their purposes. Some leaflets are intended to be distributed one copy to every farmer. In that case, they are printed 6,000,000 copies. They are sent to the 46 prefectoral governments, and prefectoral governments send them to about 600 county offices. The county offices send them to 11,000 cities, towns and village offices, and they distribute them to communities or groups of farmers. Some posters are intended to be put on the village bulletin boards, and in that case they

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are printed about 70,000, as one village has some six or seven bulletin-boards in it.

The number of posters made by the Ministry in the fiscal year 1949 was 21, that of pamphlets amounted to 71, and that of leaflet 20.

The Information Section has an Agriculture and Forestry Consultation Office. Farmers and people in general can ask this Office any questions about agriculture, forestry and fisheries by letter or by oral. The Office answers them by itself or by the help of officials in other bureaus or agencies concerned. Sometimes the members of this Office go around the prefectures to hold an itinerant inquiry meeting with farmers.

The above is a brief picture of the information activities in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Now, in Japan, the central government is mostly ahead of prefectural governments in any governmental activities, and this is also true with the information activities. But, as the number of farmers is numerous in Japan, the central government find it difficult to take contact directly with individual farmers. So the information activities of the prefectural governments are desired to be more and more strong.

Almost all the prefectural governments have information office now. They have average 10 or 15 staffs. Information media used by them are quite like that of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Press Service is very active, and, besides almost all the prefectural governments issue monthly or semi-monthly newspapers that have big circulation. As to radio, each local broadcasting station has R.F.D. and the prefectural governments takes close contact with R.F.D.

They also buy motion-picture films and go around the villages almost all the time except busy farming time. Prefectural government has a unique information media--that is wall-newspaper. Almost all the prefectural governments issue wall-newspapers once or twice a month. Each wall-newspaper has four or five articles with pictures. They are put on village bulletin-boards, bus stations or village offices. As the Japanese farmers like to see better than to read, the wall-newspaper is welcomed very much by farmers in general. About half of the space is occupied by the articles relating to agriculture, forestry or fisheries; other half is tax, public health and so on.

The connection between the prefectural governments and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is taken by means of Information Letter. The prefectural government can take information materials from this weekly letter.

In conclusion, the Information Section of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is suffering from the following three points.

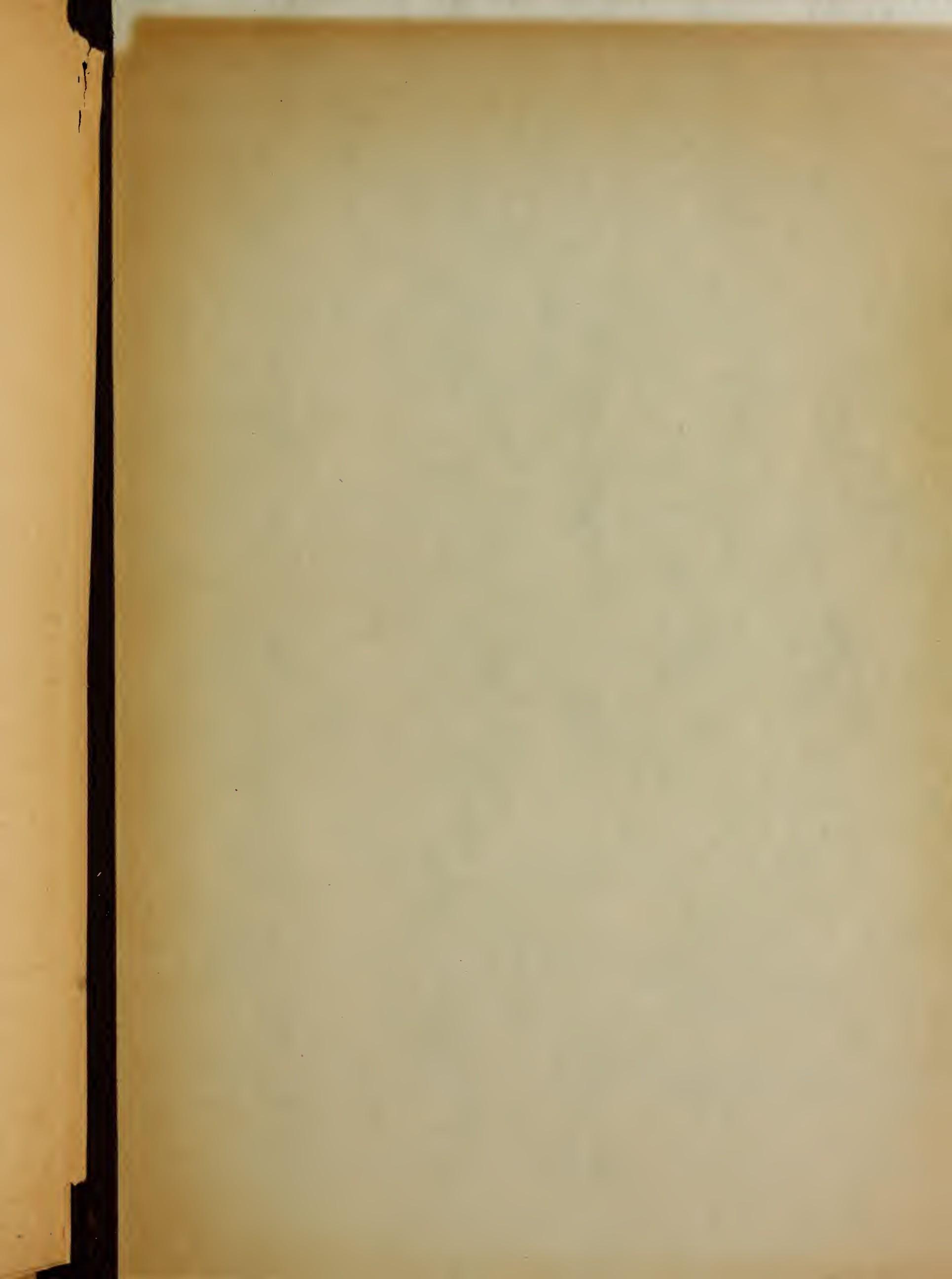
The first is the lack of recognition about the importance of information services among the high officials in the governments--that results in the shortness of budget afforded to the Information Section.

The second is that the information activities of prefectural governments are not always so strong as one desired to be. Some of them are pretty good, but others are not.

The third is that in Japan the private information activities outside the government are not/so strong

We are trying to overcome these difficulties. Thank you.

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